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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTENSION WORK

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A radio talk by Dr. C.B. Smith, Chief, Office of Cooperative Extension Work, Washington, D.C., delivered through a network of 51 radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, Saturday, August 22, 1931.

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This talk deals with recent developments in extension work on the farm and in the farm home. You know there are about 4,500 men and women agents of the State agricultural colleges and United States Department of Agriculture, located out in the counties, who serve the farmer and his family. They are a kind of energizing agents who won't let farm folks be contented with mediocre work or unprofitable ways. They counsel with farmers, as do lawyers and doctors. They are men and women professionally trained in farming and home making. They are called county agricultural agents and home demonstration agents. They usually have their offices in the court house at the county seat.

A few examples will help show you the nature of the work they do. One of the first and most striking in all extension comes from California and relates to a piece of dairy work there:

Back in 1921 the dairy industry of the State of California was on a very unsatisfactory basis. There was little or no profit in it. The yield of butterfat for the cows of the whole State averaged about 182 pounds, per cow. The county agricultural agents, under the guidance of the State extension director and the various farm groups of the State set their hearts on increasing the productivity of the dairy cows from 182 pounds of butterfat to an average of 265 pounds of butterfat per cow for the whole State and to do it within a period of 10 years. That was in 1921. Then they all went to work. They organized cow test associations, got in high-grade breeding bulls, improved the feeding practices and management, kept eternally at it through the county agents, the press, at meetings and tours, year after year; and when the last Federal census was taken in 1930, it was found that the average yield of the more than 500,000 dairy cows of California was 256.6 pounds of butterfat per cow - an average increase per cow of 83 pounds of butterfat in 10 years. Now, that may not sound like much to you, but it means about \$25,000,000 a year more to California dairymen and is an extremely significant thing in farming in that State.

Then, there is the story of how extension workers aided the farmers of North Carolina to add \$20,000,000 to the value of food and feed crops in 1930. Ordinarily nearly half of the cultivated acreage of North Carolina is planted to cotton and tobacco. The large surplus of these cash crops and consequent low prices, made it desirable to reduce the acreage. Also North Carolina farmers were in the habit of sending about \$158,180,000 out of the State each year to pay for the food and feed that they needed. To counteract overproduction in the cash crops and to enable farmers to keep their money for home markets, the extension service carried on a vigorous grow your own living campaign. Extension workers, farmers, country merchants, and bankers were enlisted in the campaign. Every person threw his entire weight into making it a success. Extension workers and cooperators urged farmers through meetings, personal contact, the press, and in other ways to grow less cotton and tobacco and more food and feed. Well-filled pantries and storerooms on many additional farms have been the result. Not only was \$20,000,000 added to the value of food and feed crops by North Carolina farmers, but the cotton acreage was reduced 18 per cent in the (over)

in the State. Had all the cotton states reduced their acreage a like percentage, the cotton situation would have been substantially helped. While the farmers of North Carolina do not have much money because of low prices for cash crops, they do have enough food for the family and feed for their livestock and that is not so bad when part of the world is out of employment and hungry.

Of course, the big thing extension agents are stressing at this time all over the United States is the economics of production. Produce what the nation needs in the amount of the nation needs.. Do not overproduce. A great surplus usually means a heavy loss to the farmer. In times of depression and surpluses it is only the efficient farmer who can win out. He must produce still more cheaply, more efficiently if he would show a profit. That means in these days that he must cut his labor costs through the use of improved machinery. He must have a farm big enough to keep this improved machinery busy the maximum number of days during the year. He must increase his yields per man through the use of rotations and highgrade fertilizers and selected seed. He must produce high quality crops through spraying, selection and grading. That is the only kind for which there is a market in times of surpluses. He must know how to feed his stock wisely and economically to get the most gain out of the best balanced feeds. Extension agents are not stressing more production but rather greater efficiency of production on less acres, and those acres only the best acres of the farm. Return to pasture and woodland the poorer acres of the farm is the counsel of extension agents. All these things extension agents are stressing with farmers everywhere today, so that farmers now have a better understanding of the present economic situation and the causes for it than ever before, and there is also less radicalism among rural people than usual in such periods of depression.

Great stress has been placed the present season, too, on the making and care of home gardens and canning of surpluses. If your barns and granaries are filled and the smokehouse hangs full, if you can see cattle in the pasture and pigs happy in the clover lot, if you can hear the song of poultry in the barnyard and the orchards hang heavy, even if prices are low there is a peace of mind on the farm that the man who usually gets \$10 a day in town but is out of work doesn't know.

Just now a good many town families are moving back on the abandoned farms of some of the northern sections of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and perhaps other States. They find shelter there with little cost for rent. They find fuel that cost only the gathering. They find wild berries in the woods, fish in the lakes and streams, an occasional day's work on farms or on the road or in the woods. They are at the sources of food production and are among friendly people. They can grow a garden and perhaps feed a pig or two, keep some poultry and a cow; and, while there is but little hope that they will ever make money in farming or add much to the surplus, they can make a living and it is better than living in town with no work and rent to pay.

When an emergency arises in agriculture, as at the present time, the extension agents of the agricultural college and Department of Agriculture put all energy into direct assistance to the farmer. Drought, storm, flood, insect plagues, epidemics of diseases of crops or livestock have found extension agents and specialists on the firing line showing farm people how to meet the crisis, to save their crops or animals if that is possible, or to guide them to relief measures which may help them through. The calamitous drought in the South and some of the Central States again showed the worth of the extension agents

and extension work. Many thousands of farmers were helped in taking advantage of freight reductions, and in seeking drought and seed loans. They were taught how to save livestock, by emergency plantings, directed where to find feed and supplies, provide food for their families and how to ease through a most difficult situation in other ways. Insect plagues in some Western States, even now, again find the county agent leading in the attack to save crops through cooperative united action. If there is help to be given, if there is anything that can be done to meet an emergency, the college of agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture bring that help through the local extension agent.

Occasionally the expression is heard that agricultural extension agents have in a measure, been the cause of overproduction.

May I say that, scientific research, agricultural extension teaching, the use of improved machinery, greater output per man, are not the causes of our present difficulties, but are the major ways in which the situation can be met.

County agents and home demonstration agents and extension specialists in the whole cooperative extension system are working hand in hand with farmers to produce still more efficiently, more wisely, more in accordance with national needs and it is our belief that the farmer will pull out of the present depression with as little permanent damage as any other national group.

